Start anew

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Start anew

by sonicsora

Summary

Fate always had a deft hand. Quick illusive fingers that could snatch one thing from you and grant another only moments later.

Tang Shen and Hamato Yoshi learn this first hand when they leave Japan together after losing their daughter and the Hamato Clan. They find themselves a new family and a new life. A new life of mutants, ninjas and chaos.

Notes

After watching Tale of Yokai, I had a particular idea hit me. I really liked seeing Tang Shen as a PERSON opposed to this fabled true love who is perfect/beautiful in every way. I wanted to try my hand at making an AU where she gets to live and the turtles have an actual mom.

This will be a series of drabbles in the same universe. I don't plan on recounting whole episodes, as this will mostly be exploring Splinter and Tang Shen's relationship/their bond with their children. The timeline will jump around a bit, but when we're on a certain episode or the like I'll make it clear.

Chapter 1: The deft hand of fate

Fate always had a deft hand. Quick illusive fingers that could snatch one thing from you and grant another only moments later.

The loss of the dojo, the loss of his father, his daughter and his clan had been a terrible volley of blows. If not for Tang Shen, Yoshi wasn't sure what he would do. Her careful grip on his battle hardened hands was a rock like he had never known. A steadying force in the storm of their lives collapsing on itself. She grieved just as much as he did, but held fast. Some days he could not rise from his futon, but she would pull him from the grief with a soft tired smile or a sly joke. A riddle or game would fall from her lips and Yoshi would find himself distracted from what ate at him.

The tragedy had only brought them closer. Funerals had been arranged, land sold and plans slowly being built for their future.

They mourned together for the past, for the future. Yoshi saw no reason to stay in Japan now. He relented to his wife's long held wish of seeing America. It was as beautiful as they imagined, sweeping skyscrapers, a lively populace, a sea of possibilities for their future.

Their home was nothing akin to what they once had, but starting over always had its disadvantages. With all the opportunities and promises, there were still problems. Rude neighbors, wary stares and the occasional comment could grate at anyone.

The couple made the best of the situation, sprucing up the place with potted plants, old remnants of their previous lives, framed photos. Tang Shen found comfort in a routine they built together.

He wanted to be a rock for her just as she had been for him. The comforting shoulder for days when she came home teary eyed and frustrated from comments from co-workers. The gentle hand that held her own when they sat on the balcony together trying to see the stars over the glow of the city. The quiet ear to hear out her irritated complaints about the injustices laid out on the citizens.

Yoshi had assumed one more thing could help ease the burden, pets. That walk to a pet store after his shift turned out to be a life changing one for the couple.

"Michelangelo!" The small turtle froze where he stood, shoulders hunching in on themselves at the familiar tone of voice. "Aww maaaann." He reluctantly turned to face his mother, guilt written across his face.

"Mooooom, c'mon, it's… not even a big deal."

"It is very much a 'big deal', young man." She reached out to gently pluck the cookie from his hand, depositing it back in the jar. "You know you cannot have sweets until after dinner."

The youngest of the four brothers wilted under his mother's gaze, devolving into a pout.

"But I'm hungry now!"

"We have other things to eat beyond cookies." She reached out to scoop up the small turtle in her arms, "Come now. Last I checked it was time for a nap."

The youngest simply grumbled, pressing his face into her shoulder as the woman carried him out of the kitchen. The walk did the trick of lulling the small turtle to a light doze. Even at seven years old, Mikey was susceptible to falling asleep in Tang Shen's arms.

It wasn't hard to find the rest of their family, the three other children were napping comfortably in a pile. Yoshi peeked in from the next room, surprise flickered across his features before amusement settled in.

Her husband chuckled lowly as he stepped out of the dojo, he closed the shoji doors silently behind himself as he walked forward. "Trying for another cookie, I see?"

"Of course. Our children are more than a little rambunctious." The woman murmured lowly back, settling Mikey down next to his brothers. With only minor grumbling Mikey rolled back into his usual spot in the nap pile to get comfortable. Satisfied Mikey would stay, she turned to face her husband smiling at him.

So many things had changed, but Tang found herself able to see Yoshi easily in the new body he bore. His smile, his gentle gaze and flowing movements. The way he looked at her now, an almost silly lovesick expression.

She gestured for him to follow after her, not looking to see if he did as she walked. Her own movements weren't as quiet or well practiced, but she had picked up a few things from living as they did. She could only tell he was following her from the occasional swish of his tail against the concrete.

The kitchen was as she left it, warm from an afternoon of baking and a little messy from lunch with a set of four seven year olds. A single stood was propped against the cupboards in an attempt to reach the cookie jar. Tang Shen chuckled lowly, moving to tuck it away where it belonged before settling her back against the counter to gaze at her husband. The warmth faded as what she wanted to speak of came back to her.

"It seems you may have been right." She knit her fingers together over her chest, "They do have an aptitude for ninjutsu."

Surprise rolled through the rat, followed by a quiet gratefulness. "Does this mean…?"

"I, I'm still not entirely sure if I am comfortable with the idea, but…" She spared a glance in the direction their children lay napping before gazing up at her husband. "You are right. They won't be able to live without knowing how to defend themselves. Not in this world we live in."

“I will train them in a year or so. I want them to still have a childhood, just as you do.” He reached a clawed hand out to settle over her own. Yoshi wasn’t oblivious to his wife’s worries. They had more than a few heated discussions regarding the idea of training the children. He had arrogantly claimed they would be ninjas and been told soundly that it was best not to assume such. “I don’t want them to be warriors too soon either.”

Neither of them wanted to lose another child to ninja clan warfare. Much less have one of their sons become what Saki was. They both remembered the rage on his face with sharp clarity. The incoming strike meant for Yoshi that Tang Shen took in his place. The scars still lingered on her skin.

“Thank you.” She took his hand in her own, lacing their fingers together. “I also request you train me as well.” That openly surprised the rat, his ears flicking back and whiskers shifting intently.

“Train you-?” Tang had never shown an interest in ninjutsu, not beyond discomfort and the violence that came along with it.

“Yes. I want to be able to protect them as well, Yoshi. I won’t be a bystander.”

The rat paused uncertainly, squeezing her hand. “I- If you wish, we will do it.” He wasn’t entirely comfortable with the idea himself, but he couldn’t say no to Tang. Even after his transformation, even at his ugliest she loved him. “It will be a hard path, but I know you will do well.”

“When do we start?”

“Tomorrow.” He squeezed her hand now, offering comfort. “When the children are asleep, we will begin.”

She nodded slowly, “Tomorrow.”

She was not quite human, but not quite mutant either. Tang Shen straddled the line. When she looked at herself in the mirror, she could pass so easily for a human. She was still the same woman, dark eyes, dark hair, the same nose and same lips. Beyond that, her skin below her collarbone changed to a strange almost sickly green, patches of scales taking root.

With time she found more scales, more patches of different green across her body. The skin of her back hardened, becoming a protective layer. Yoshi had commented it rather looked like a shell trying to form. She could remember his curious fingers tracing along the line of hard skin, how she could barely feel it in certain places.

She wondered how long it would take before all of her humanity was swept away and she was a turtle? Some part of her dreaded the day. Beyond the selfish and petty fear of being a complete monster- it meant she could not gather supplies from the surface any longer. It meant her family would have no food or money.

That thought was far scarier than being a mutant turtle.

“Still troubled by the scales?” Yoshi’s voice startled her from her reprieve, the woman jerking back in surprise as she looked over her shoulder at the rat man. His robes were undone, hanging loosely around his body. Her own blouse was partially unbuttoned, revealing the odd scaly skin to the low lighting of their home.

She gave a weak laugh as she turned around, unbuttoning the rest of her blouse. “More than I would like to admit.”

“If it does happen- if you do change. We will find another way to keep our family fed.” The Yoshi she knew before, he would have commented she would always be beautiful in his eyes. How times had changed them, changed them for the better.

“I know, but it will worry me endlessly.” She shed her shirt, loosely setting it aside for now and working on the bra she wore. The rat hummed lowly at that, stepping forward to help her. “We have four sons now. I want to be sure we take care of them.”

Yoshi’s expression softened at that, a soft smile curling across his lips. “We will. Even if we must dig through dumpsters and alleyways more often for what we need, we will.”

“And here I thought dumpsters were reserved for a romantic evening?” She teased, relieved by his assurances. Having a partner made all of this easier. Made all of it feel less surreal.

Yoshi laughed at that, ears flicking upwards his smile becoming more lively now. “Certain dumpsters are reserved for romantic evenings, my love.” Her bra fell away thanks to Yoshi’s quick hands, being set aside alongside her shirt.

“So you have a system in mind for dumpsters.” She mused with an arch of her brow, “A classification system of trash. I hope it isn’t too complicated.”

“I know you could keep up with anything I throw at you.” He leaned in giving her a quick peck, laughing when she returned it more enthusiastically. Nimble fingers threaded through dark colored fur and their laughter quieting as they turned out the lights for the night.

Her shell finally grew in when the boys were twelve. Tang Shen thought she had known agony before- she had been very wrong. The pain had been unbearable. At some point she had lost track if she was screaming or if she was imagining it. She had been so purely lost in the haze of pain, time had meant nothing to her, much less her husband's gentle words.

All Yoshi could do was apply cold compresses to her back, carefully clean up lost skin and try to keep her hydrated through the whole ordeal. Her steady rock in the storm.

Some part of her was relieved when it was finished, another angry that it meant they were losing their options. Could she hide this new growth? Could she still pass for human?

She had no real time to be angry, not when her husband and children looked so terrified. Even if Yoshi held a steady facade, Tang could see through it. He had been afraid he would lose her

that night. A fear she felt when Saki attacked Yoshi so many years ago.

The boys slept in bed with them that night, nervously protective of their mother whilst Yoshi tried to keep them from making the new sensitive shell hurt. It had been the shift from her old clothes to kimonos and looser fabrics.

Not long after her shell settled in, she started to lose her hair. Some part of her was devastated, embarrassed. It was prideful and silly, but she enjoyed having her hair even with the strangeness her life had become. Even with the mutations slowly creeping up on her with time. Tang Shen had hoped she could somehow keep her hair.

Yoshi helped her clean up, carefully pressing reassuring kisses against her neck. "I'm sorry, my love." Long ago, she had been the one cradling his head in her lap, offering him comfort over his lost humanity. She had eased his pain of shifting bones and growing in new teeth and the onslaught of fur settling across his body.

Tang simply bit her lip and held onto his hand. "I'll get over it." She promised, more to herself than Yoshi.

Maybe she could look more like her sons now.

Chapter 2: Patience and gifts

Shen laughed, rolling her eyes fondly as she leaned her shell back against the couch. Her youngest son was making himself comfortable against her, in a full on sulk. “Let me guess, you’ve angered your brother, Raphael?”

“He was being a jerk, mom!” The blue eyed reptile replied, his pout growing worse by the minute. “I just wanted to hang out!”

“Sometimes Raphael needs time to himself, dear.” She rested a hand against the top of his head, gently stroking the bald smooth skin. “He’s growing up.”

“Growing up doesn’t mean he’s gotta be a butt!” Mikey blustered, though his pout was fading at the calming affection from his mother. “You and dad don’t act like that.”

“But, we do need time alone. Everyone needs solace. You take time to yourself as well.” She leaned over to press a kiss against his forehead fondly. The fourteen year old relaxed at that. “He shouldn’t lash out, certainly, but he needs time for himself. Just as much as you need your comic book time.”

“Yeah…” He pressed his cheek against her shoulder, deflating fully from his sulking. “I guess you’re right.”

“He’ll come find you when he wants to be with you. He’s just having a hard time now. This is the time in your lives when you’re becoming more independent.”

“I doubt I’ll be that moody though.”

“I doubt it as well. You’re my little ray of sunshine after all.” She tickled his plastron playfully, earning a laugh from the young teen. He squirmed around falling off the couch and rolling across the floor. “Mooooom!!!”

“Woah, mom-“ Donny’s fingers fumbled to hold onto the book in his grasp, chewing at his lips as he skimmed over the title again. “Where did you even get this!?”

“Now that is a secret my dear.” She answered with a laugh, miming locking her lips and throwing away a key. “You were speaking of it so excitedly, I thought I should find it.”

Donny flipped it open, skimming through the pages. It was an important textbook, one of the best ones on the market for advanced engineering students. It wasn’t the most modern edition, but it was still valuable.

He snapped it closed, setting it aside to stand up and hug his mother. The older mutant laughed softly, gladly returning the affection. “My days of surface dwelling are soon to be numbered, so I thought I could splurge a little for my boys.”

“Geeze, mom.” He pulled away, rubbing the back of his neck uncertainly. It was still odd to look at her and see her looking less human by the day. The green scales had been slowly creeping along her skin, leaving patches on her shoulders and arms. Bones shifted and her human face was changing into something that looked like their own.

Donny felt guilty at times, wishing he could fix it for his mother. If he was smarter, better, quicker witted- he could help her and their dad be human again.

Apparently his thoughts were clear enough for his mother to read on his face, a careful hand settling against his cheek. “Don’t worry about what I was. Focus on who we’ll be in the future.”

“You’re as bad as dad…” He grumbled back, leaning into the touch.

Tang Shen laughed, “I would say we’re two of a kind, but I like to think I can out pace that old rat.”

Chapter 3: A start

Chapter Summary

Yoshi remembers that fateful night he became a mutant.

Even now, he clearly could recall that night, that equally horrible and wonderful night. The transformation thanks to mutagen had rocked his body to its core, shifting bones, teeth and skin. Hamato Yoshi was not a man any longer. Not a human man. When he saw his reflection in a puddle fear and disgust settled sharply in his belly. If not for the faint gurgling and whining from the turtles, Yoshi had been certain he would have fled deeper into the sewers to hide. He could have easily vanished into his own grief and disgust.

Instead he fumbled to his feet, realizing the transformation had taken hours when he saw the sky above. It had shifted from the blue of mid-afternoon to a dark sky full of stars. All his disgust with himself melted away when he remembered *Tang Shen*.

He tucked the children (were they children… or animals?) in the ratty fabric of his coat for warmth, finding himself using old training to find a pay phone. Their home number comes easily, even with his strange new hand. Even in New York, this part of the city was dead enough at night he didn't have to be completely on guard while calling his wife.

The phone barely has a chance to ring before it's picked up. "Tang-" He barely had a chance to say her name before she cut in. "Yoshi, where are you?" Worry and panic clear in her voice.

"There was an accident, I- something happened." He found himself staring at his free hand, examining his fur and claws. Putting his words together felt nearly impossible now. "I went to get you a surprise from the pet store and there was an accident."

Less an accident and more a fight thanks to his own need to investigate. He didn't want to scare her any longer. After what happened to their clan, fighting much less ninjutsu was a sore topic.

"Yoshi, where are you? Are you hurt?" Tang was not going to let him handle this alone. "I'm coming for you, so do not try to tell me this is nothing. I know you Yoshi. You're barely making sense now." He relented, checking the streets for names and telling her to be careful. Tang simply snorted in response and told him the same in return before hanging up.

Tang was his rock then, even when she found him in tatters of his clothes, more of a giant rat than a man she did not run. There was shock, questions and worry, but no fear.

When she saw the four turtles bundled in his coat, something changed on her features. Her expression softened. Even now he was not sure what that meant, or why she took such fondness for the turtles. Sometimes he wondered if it was because of their loss of Miwa. The loss was still fresh back then.

“We need to get home, take care of all of you.” She managed to cover him up enough with a floppy hat and gigantic jacket to smuggle them both back to their apartment. A small humble home not meant for six people. Much less meant to hide five mutants.

She had insisted back then on carrying the boys back, protectively keeping them close to her chest. Mutagen was fresh on the turtles still, but Tang would hear not a word of Yoshi carrying them when he was still so unsteady on his feet. When things settled, he explained what happened. The strange men, the odd canister.

Chapter 4: Mutation day

Chapter Summary

> The turtles celebrate their 15th mutation day. Four teenagers are unreasonably excited about omelets and cake.

By their fifteenth mutation day, their mother was completely a turtle. None of them had a way to really stop it, not that Tang Shen would hear any of it. She had come to terms with it, even if her children mourned over her loss of humanity.

“It was a long time happening, we all know that.” She tutted softly when it was brought up, dark eyes amused and smile more than a little playful. “Besides, now I look like my wonderful children. Yoshi can’t say you take after him any longer.” Yoshi snorted in amusement at that, giving his wife a gentle nudge in turn.

“We can still worry about you, ma.” Raph grumped over his slice of birthday cake, sinking back into his seat. “I mean- doesn’t it bother you at all?”

“It used to.” Given their age now, she was honest about it to some extent. Her boys were no longer children she had to shield completely. “But I do not lament a minor loss, when I have a beautiful family around me.” She leaned over and gently pinched his cheek, chuckling as he tolerated the doting with a grumbling sound. Raph always folded for Tang’s doting. “You’re so sappy, ma.”

“I’m allowed to be at my age. Now dig in before your cake gets cold.”

Mikey snickered openly, sharing a glance with the equally amused Leo and Donny before attempting to do pinch Raph’s cheek as well when their parents were distracted. Clearly wanting to rile up his brother. Raph’s clear solution was roughly swatting Mikey’s hand away with a low warning growl.

“No hitting at the table.” Yoshi stated firmly from his own spot at the kitchen table. “You know the rules, boys. We only hit in the dojo.”

Raph scowled sharply now, protesting. “C’mon, dad he started it-“ Yoshi held a palm up silencing the protest, “This also means no riling your brother up, Michelangelo.” He pointedly stared at the youngest of the four. “Do not think I didn’t see what you were trying to do.”

The smaller turtle puffed up his cheeks in protest. The heat of snickering aimed at Raph was now squarely on him with the scolding shifting gears. Raph was mollified, digging into his cake now that Mikey was getting it too. “Aww c’mon, master. I was just teasing.”

“Don’t tease your brother because I showed him affection, Michelangelo.” Tang cut in firmly, sharing a glance with Yoshi now. “I had thought at 15 you’d grow out of that.”

Mikey sunk back at that, knowing he was overruled by both parents and couldn’t get on Raph’s nerves openly at least. He glanced to his larger brother, knowing the routine by now. “Sorry, Raph.” No one got out of apologizing or talking things out around the house.

Raph grunted in response, accepting the apology. Normally he’d drag it out to torture Mikey, but both parents weren’t going to overlook it now.

“What kind of cake is this anyway? I mean, it’s not algae.” Donny questioned, examining the cake on his fork curiously. He clearly didn’t mind it from how fast he had been inhaling his slice of cake. “It’s not chocolate either.”

“Ah, the box was Red Velvet I believe. It has been a few years since we’ve had this flavor.” He glanced at Tang for conformation. She nodded, “I thought given it’s your birthday day it’d be a nice surprise.” Even with her mutation settled, Tang still passed more for human than Yoshi. A few heavy layers of clothing alongside a wig and no one really looked at her.

“Sure beats having algae.” Raph agreed with a mouthful of food. “Did you use eggs like in those commercials?” Their broken down TV gave him a rough idea of how cakes were made. If not for that hold over from Yoshi and Tang’s old life, they’d live in relative exile from the world above.

“I traded a few things and managed to get a carton actually.” Tang had to grin a little at the excitement that instilled amongst the teenagers. The scarcity of fresh meals meant any kind of fresh food was exciting. “It ruins the surprise for tomorrow, but I’m sure we can have omelets for breakfast.”

“Holy cow.” Leo breathed out, clearly excited. “What did you trade?”

“Just a few old toys. Ones I knew you boys grew out of.” She glanced at Mikey, already seeing the slight touch of panic rise on his features. “None of your comics, my son. They’re all in your room still.” She stated gently back. With the crisis averted Mikey gladly dug back into his dessert. Conversation around the table was idle now, comfortable.

“Can you tell us the story?” Mikey cut in when conversation hit a lull, focusing on his father. Tang laughed softly at the familiar question glancing back at her husband herself.

“I’ve told it many times, my son.” Yoshi chuckled lightly, “Do you really want to hear it again?”

“Yes! C’mon! I mean, it’s exciting and birthday related!” He clasped his hands together leaning forward, “Please! Pleaaaasseee-!” He was winding up for another please by the time Raphael leaned in covering Mikey’s mouth with his hand. “Please, just to shut him up.”

With comfortable familiarity, Yoshi fell into the old tale of mutation day. Tang smiled faintly, resting her chin in her palm as her husband wove the tale for the teenagers. Even now they still were relatively transfixed.

When the story wrapped up, Leonardo glanced amongst his brothers before speaking. “So, Sensei, now that we’re 15, I think we’re finally ready to go to the surface.” The four teenagers glanced at their parents with hopeful smiles.

“Yes.” The cheers that followed were promptly cut off when Yoshi finished, “But no.” The boys groaned at the denial.

“You’re still young.” Tang stated firmly back, not particularly enthused in the idea herself. “15 is certainly a milestone, but it is dangerous up there.”

“Your mother is right, while you’ve grown powerful and capable, you’re still untested.” He rose from his seat, moving to gather plates now, “You lack the maturity to use your skills wisely.” The ninja master started working on washing dishes. Tang herself rose to put away left overs, relieved the topic was closed now. Her boys were far too young to go to the surface.

“Isn’t that just a no?”

“Yes and no, wisdom comes from experience, and experience comes from making mistakes.” Tang squinted at her husband, already knowing this wasn’t the best line of denial to shutter the topic. She turned about to interject when Donatello spoke again.

“Ah, so- in order for us to gain wisdom, we have to make mistakes. So we *can* go!” If anyone could pick a hole in their father’s logic, it was their brightest child. Tang Shen turned from the counter, watching the boys now.

“No.”

“…And yes?”

“No.” Yoshi repeated glancing over his shoulder at the teenagers. Donatello simply groaned sinking into his seat at the lack of logic. Leo patted his brother on the arm vaguely before picking up where the brainy turtle left off.

“Dad, mom- we know you guys are trying to protect us. We appreciate how much you care,” He caught both parents gazes, continuing more strongly, “But, we can’t spend our whole lives down here…”

Yoshi glanced at his wife thoughtfully, after years of marriage, the two could communicate with just a look now. What Leonardo said had some merit. They couldn’t always protect the boys, much less keep them underground forever. Tang sighed, rubbing a hand across her snout tiredly. The sigh was shared by Yoshi. When the pair glanced back at the children, the teenagers were giving them the puppy eye treatment.

“Fine. You can go, tonight.” The agreement was met with cheering.

“For a few hours at most.” Tang cut in, wanting to make things clear. “You have two hours above ground.” She held up two of her three fingers. “If you are late, you’re going to be in trouble.”

“Like, exploding algae in the oven trouble?” Mikey questioned nervously back.

“Yes.” Both parents answered at the same time.

Chapter 5: Sparring

Chapter Summary

Leo has the bad luck of trying to meditate while his parents spar.

Chapter Notes

Tang Shen's fighting style is a big ole mix of Splinter's training and having to defend herself on the streets on food runs. Also a big push back on my part against the annoying stereotype that women are FAST BUT DO BARELY ANY DAMAGE. Tang Shen can fuck you up *pretty* badly.

Raph learned a lot by watching her fight. He is kinda a big doof for his mom.

I'm also a sucker for the idea of Tang carrying around a lot of anger (i mean her child 'died', her friends and Saki betrayed her. Who wouldn't be angry about that?) but has a good grasp on how to control it and channel it to help her. Raph meanwhile is what happens when all kinds of anger has none of that sense of control.

Watching their parents spar always proved to be a lesson. Even if not stated by Sensei or Mom, the four teenagers tended to still find the sparring hard not to watch. Even now Leonardo found his meditation hard to stay on task of as his parents circled one another in the dojo. Wooden training weapons meeting and the two trading quick blows.

Master Splinter (always Master Splinter in the dojo) moved with a fluid grace, a lifetime of training making his attacks precise and deadly. Even with the bulk of his weight he moved so swiftly he was hard to keep track of when he lost himself in a spar. Master Splinter would always go for smaller attacks. Quick hard to track blows when left behind that stung, but startled his opponents due to how quickly it came. He wanted to discourage or frighten someone away opposed to terribly injure unless absolutely needed.

Tang Shen- for being smaller couldn’t move as quickly, with a shell that wasn’t a real possibility for her. She hit twice as hard though in contrast. She didn’t have a lifetime of training akin to their master, but she was able to stay on balance with him by thinking differently. She used all of her own weight for every blow, every strike was meant to disable and send her opponent back. She came back harder each time without losing breath or focus. Their mother had no qualms about fighting dirty if the time came for it. Master Splinter grew up with an honor code he was bound to, their mother did not. (Leo always genuinely wondered if Raph took after her when it came to fighting. Not that he was going to say

anything about it. Raph got a bit sore when anyone implied he was even remotely a ‘mama’s boy’.)

Wooden weaponry clacked together loudly as the two met once again, Tang’s expression was one of determination as she pushed to make Master Splinter stumble. He held his ground attempting to feint an attack only to be met with his wife’s forceful counter to his real blow. She sent him slightly back on the mat, still holding her own ground. The smirk on her face earned a laugh from the rat, whiskers twitching rapidly as he smiled back at her. His next step was measures, followed by a ‘Come get me’ motion with his hands. Tang chuckled lowly, whispering something lowly in Japanese that only made Splinter's fur stand up slightly.

Leo did his best to hide a grimace, realizing quickly enough this was going to be a flirty sparring match. Apparently both had forgotten he was here.

Leo exhaled loudly (a not very subtle hint he was here too) trying to focus on meditation instead of the sparring going on. He really didn’t want to see his parents get… romantic in the dojo. Both weren't supposed to anyway given how stringent Master Splinter was about the importance of the dojo. It was a place of reflection and practice, usually.

The low talk in Japanese that followed as a strong testament both hadn’t heard him at all and were still flirting whilst trading blows. The eventual rhythm of wooden weapons hitting one another was enough for Leo to focus on before he at least vaguely started to meditate. It was a relief, though the niggling thoughts of his parents possibly being romantic in front of him made it hard to stay focused.

The next time Leo opened his eyes he groaned audibly when he saw his parents more or less making out in the middle of the dojo. Master Splinter's arms were wrapped around Tang's waist, holding her close as the two kissed. Her fingers were tangled in his fur, pulling him down to her. His lament came out more frustrated than he meant it to.“C’mon, seriously?!”

The two startled away from each other clearly surprised, Splinter fluffing up in embarrassment and Tang averting her gaze drastically. “Leonardo!” Splinter’s attempts at scolding fell flat for obvious reasons.

“Sorry, Sensei but- uh.” All he could do was make an awkward hand gesture at the two of them.

“You don’t have to apologize, dear.” Tang cut in, quickly trying to wrap up the awkwardness. She quickly adjusted her kimono avoiding her son’s eyes still. “It might be best if you meditate in your room for now.”

“Right.” Leo quickly blew out the candles nearby, moving to stand and make a beeline out of the dojo. Great. He seriously needed some brain bleach after this. This was worse than some of the fan written stories he found about Space Heros…

Chapter 6: Changed and yet unchanged

Chapter Summary

Tang Shen and Yoshi go through their nightly routine.

Chapter Notes

Spoiler: I have pet rats. So I'm kind of a dork and slowly sliding in rat behavior on Yoshi-Master Splinter's side. He's more man than rat, but still has moments of squinting at his sons, licking his hands and cleaning their faces. As teenagers they really are not fans, while Tang Shen laughs at it every time.

Rats are highly social, very clean, and playful animals. Rats groom each other socially. So I figured this would be a fun thing to vaguely include/imply Yoshi gets his rat instincts to chill by grooming his wife every night. Alongside mentioning chattering teeth/bruxing (which is a sign of great stress or great contentment depending on the situation for the rat). I'd include mention of boggling, but Splinter's face is built more human like than rat like, so it's not as likely to happen.

For more info & videos http://understandingpetfancyrats.com/2014/10/21/why-does-my-pet-rat-boggle-and-brux-what-boggling-and-bruxing-really-means-2/

The changes of her body were a map of time, a map of things lost and gained. Tang Shen could only be amused at her past self, assuming her pregnancy would be the worst she would endure. Growing a shell and plastron had proved much worse in differing ways. Her breasts flattened into nothing when her plastron started to come. Her hair had fallen out, from her scalp, from her face. Human features faded into those of a turtle, a rounded snout, smoother head and smaller set eyes.

The green scales had taken root, the sea foam green taking over the pale color of her skin completely. Splotches of various shades of green dotted her snout, across her shoulders, and randomly across her legs. She had grown to joke the boys took after her given how their scale colorations appeared upon her body in freckle form. Michelangelo had been giddy to compare his freckling to those their mother had.

Yoshi had spent time memorizing the spots as they appeared across her skin. In the privacy of their room he would kiss across those freckles. (He joked about connecting the dots only to be swatted at by his wife.) Just as she had spent much time memorizing the way his ears

flicked with his moods, the twitching of his whiskers and the way his fur felt under her hands.

She relaxed under her husband's familiar touch, agile fingers moving across the hard surface of her shell. Yoshi was humming a familiar tune as he worked, cleaning the day's mess from the hard textured surface. The two were comfortably settled next to their futon in the privacy of their room. Kimono's set aside for the day. The low lights of candles illuminated the room.

"One would think given we wear clothing you would attract less dirt." He murmured lowly to her, teasing as he worked. Tang snorted loudly back, her eyes closing as she smiled. "We have four sons, Yoshi. Any semblance of cleanliness is hard to keep."

"It is similar to when Miwa was a newborn." He mused quietly back, his hand settle against her shell, moving across the grooves present. "Those first few months were the hardest."

"She was such a particular child. Refused to be held by anyone who wasn't one of us." Tang Shen laughed gently at the memory, it left her feeling nostalgic now. It almost felt easy now to think back to a single baby needing them in contrast to four near toddler turtles. "She gave your poor father a hard time…"

He pressed his nose gently against the back of her neck, "I had never seen him so bewildered before that point."

"The head of the Hamato clan, rejected by an infant. Yuuta took it well enough." She teased back, reaching out to rest brush the tips of her fingers across the side of his snout. "He… he would have been a good grandfather to our boys." Tang Shen could so easily picture the old man surrounded by their sons.

"He would have." Tang Shen can feel her spouse's whiskers moving on their own accord tickling her skin. "Your parents as well, though I'm fairly sure your mother would have thought they were frogs."

His words elicited a laugh from the turtle. "Our odd tiny frog sons. She would ask if they hopped everywhere and ate flies." She could so easily see her mother making that assumption initially. Her mother was far from a fool, but had a hard time with anything that wasn't a cat. Some part of Tang Shen wondered distantly if she should contact them again. Would it be safe? Would it be wise?

Yoshi broke her thoughts with a peck, then another and another. The turtle chuckled, shifting where she sat to turn and face her husband. "Using my distraction against me?"

"Possibly." He shifted his grasp easily to hold onto Tang Shen, arms curled around her. "You grow more beautiful with each day, my love."

"If I had known you enjoyed green so, I would have wore the color much sooner." She shifted so she could curl her arms around his neck, legs splayed around his waist in an idle motion. The ridge of her shell gave her a slight tilt upwards to look at the man in her grasp. "You look wizened, steady as an oak in the storm. A handsome man who wears wisdom and fur fairly well."

Yoshi laughed at that, finally closing the distance between them with a kiss. Years of practice let them find a balance of snout to snout kissing. It was never exactly the same as before, but neither particularly minded.

When they broke away, Tang Shen pressed another kiss against the tip of his nose. “If you are finished, I should brush out your fur.”

“I would appreciate that.” Yoshi was reluctant to let go of Tang, but knew his fur was in dire need of a proper brushing. “I groomed my fur, but- it can be a bit awkward to keep up.” Even if he relented to his natural instincts, it usually meant shedding his kimono and licking himself or licking his hands to pick through his fur. Yoshi for his part did not let his pride completely blind himself to his own needs.

“You are making me quite glad all I need is a quick rinse, Yoshi.” She chuckled back, escaping his grasp for now to sit up fully, stand and grab his brush from their nightstand. The mutant turtle came back to her husband, settle down behind him now, working on brushing out his fur. “Imagine if we were both rats. There would be fur everywhere.”

“We would never find our sons amongst the fur.” Yoshi dryly joked back.

“Our poor babies.” Tang Shen laughed as she worked on combing out his fur. Next she would attend to his tail, make sure nothing had wedged itself on the underside of his tail’s skin. In the early days Yoshi had been prone to finding terrible bugs hidden in his fur, red patches of sore skin on his tail and the tip looking mangled. Tang Shen had been able to go buy books on pet rat care and pet turtle care to be sure neither of them were completely in the dark.

With each stroke of the brush, his whiskers stilled, body slowly starting to relax under her hand. Tang Shen knew Yoshi was entirely at peace when he started grinding his teeth noisily. A rare indulgence of his more animal like instincts rising to the surface. A sign of trust a ninja rarely let show.

When his fur was finished, she carefully examined his tail, brushing her hands across the smooth skin. She went with the grain of it, trying not to cause any ruffling of the compact scales of skin knitted together that formed his tail. Yoshi held still for this, eyes closed and clearly still basking in the attention.

Tang Shen shifted forward to press a kiss against his neck now, nuzzling into it. Yoshi continued chattering lightly, enjoying the affection. Her inspection of his tail was finished meaning it was time for them to rest.

"I believe it is time for bed." She pressed another kiss against his neck, moving to rise. It took Yoshi a moment to trail after his wife to their futon. Both settled down easily after blowing out the candles in their room. Yoshi tucked his head under his wife's chin and curling close to her. Tang Shen exhaled lowly, brushing her fingers through his fur, enjoying the natural heat that radiated off of the mutant rat.

Chapter 7: Good Morning

Chapter Notes

After ten thousand years, I update this again!

But yes, I'm catching up on recent seasons. Mildly sighing at some elements in the series I forgot about.

For now some fluff whilst I work on a bigger chapter for down the road.

The sound of water running overhead wasn't unexpected by any regard. Yoshi was more than used to it, living in the sewers as long as he had made the sound undeniably routine. Waking up to the sound was almost comforting. What was far more comforting to awaken to was the steady weight of his wife settled against him. The reptile was soaking in his natural body heat. Her snout was buried against his chest, arms curled around his waist.

He nuzzled against the top of her head, giving a slow comfortable exhale. He was reluctant to awaken his wife, wanting to enjoy the moment. He brushed his fingers along the textured surface of her shell.

The sound of several crashes in a row quickly reminded the rat things were not simple. Tang Shen startled awake, jerking her head in the direction of the noise. "What-?"

"We have four teenagers." Splinter sighed in turn, rising now to grab his haori and tug it on haphazardly, plucking his cane from the floor as he went. Tang Shen was quick to follow, though still bleary from sleep. The two exited their room to find Raph chasing after Mikey through the house. Raph was coated in what looked like breakfast gone wrong. Runny eggy yolk, toast, butter, syrup, pancakes and hash browns stuck to him. Leonardo and Donatello lingered in their own doorways, squinting sleepily at the disaster of their siblings. Other buckets had been set off over other doors by Raphael in his pursuit of the youngest ninja.

"I swear I'm going to strangle you!" Raph's threat was followed by laughter, Mikey darting just out of reach. Shen sighed audibly next to her husband, rubbing her forehead. She finished adjusting her clothing as Splinter stepped forward making his presence known.

"Raphael! Michelangelo!" The sound of their father's voice and tap of his cane stopped the chaos in its tracks. Mikey tipped over onto the couch whilst Raph stumbled to a complete stop. An egg rolled off of him hitting the cement floor. "Cease this immediately!"

"What happened?" Tang Shen questioned simply back, arching an eye ridge at the teenagers, wincing a little when both launched into explaining their side. She held a hand up stifling the chatter. "Boys, one at a time, please. Raphael, start."

The red clad turtle squinted angrily at his brother, on the verge of taking a swing. “Well, this shell for brains decided to rig a bucket to fall on me! He came running up yelling it was ‘Bucket O’ Breakfast. He put one over everyone’s door!” Raphael was still fuming, attempting to brush off the sticky food bits.

Tang Shen looked to her youngest, who gladly jumped in. Mikey grinned as he spoke, “Classic Mikester. Keeping it fresh. Bucket O’ Breakfast is the only breakfast a ninja needs! Keeps you on your toes and gives you a hearty meal too! Raph just got some extra helpings is all!”

Splinter narrowed his eyes, mentally counting to ten. “Micheangelo. This is not the hour for pranks, much less a prank one should pull. You’ve wasted a large amount of food and made a mess of our home.” Whilst food was much easier to get with their friends on the surface, the rat still had an ingrained worry about wasting even a morsel of food at times. “I expect better from you, my son.”

Mikey’s grin wilted considerably. He glanced at his mother for support, not finding any. The woman was frowning unhappily now. “I- well, we have a lot of food still sensei. I just thought it’d be funny.”

“My son, it was not amusing. I know you’re creative and highly energetic but this is not how you work off your energy.” He rubbed his brow tiredly. “I expect you to clean all of this up. Then run 10 laps in the dojo after we finish breakfast and morning training.”

“Aw, man! C’mon!”

“Do not argue with your father.” Tang Shen sighed, “Start cleaning now. Your father will supervise you. I’ll take care of Raphael.” Yoshi nodded in agreement, able to guess this was a high energy day for their youngest, he was going to be present to be sure things were done. He also knew if anyone could settle Raphael, it was Tang Shen.

“I’m fine.” The largest of the teenagers protested with an annoyed huff. His smug enjoyment of Mikey’s punishment dropping completely at the fussing. “I can handle it, myself, ma.”

“Hush.” She reached out to pat at his arm. “Let me help you. Beyond that, we need to talk about your temper.” The green eyed turtle groaned in irritation, but relented as his mother steered him towards the bathroom, a trail of food being left in his wake.

“Go back to sleep, you two.” Shen made a shooing motion at her two remaining sons lingering at their bedroom doorways. “Can doooo.” Don managed with a weak thumbs up, closing his door. Leo yawned wordlessly following suit and disappearing into his own room. For once both were too tired to do color commentary.

Raph thunked himself in the bath tub, outwardly pouting as his mother closed the door behind herself. The woman had to chuckle at the sight, it reminded her of when Raphael was a toddler. He always threw a fuss over a bath. He had a similar look on his face to back then.

“Let me just pick off the smaller bits, then I’ll leave you be.” She offered in turn with a slight smile. Raph managed a grunt of agreement, staying put as Tang Shen approached. If anyone

else had been around, he would have insisted he wasn't a baby and didn't need any help. Tang Shen dragged the garbage can over to the tub, settling down on the lip of tub herself.

"You're gonna scold me too, right?" He questioned warily, watching his mother from the corner of his eye as she started pulling hash brown bits off of his shell.

"Yes." She gave her son a long look, making the teenager's pout worsen. "Raphael, we've talked about this so much, yet you still find yourself lost to your temper. Those punches thrown at your brother were meant to hurt. I could see as much." Whilst Raphael liked to play roughly with his brothers, he knew how to keep a steady balance between hurt and play.

"I try, ma, I really do- but fu-fudge Mikey just pushes all my buttons and I can't help it." He flicked off a piece of egg, frowning deeply. "I'm trying to keep control of it, but sometimes I just lose my cool and- ugh." The topic was something well worn by now. Splinter and Tang Shen both trying to help their son work through his temper.

"He should know better as well." She offers back, plucking off an egg now. "Your father will talk to him." Both parents had talked about finding better ways to channel their youngest son's energy. "For now, you're stuck with your mother asking you to breath before you lose control. Your temper is your greatest weakness as it is your strength. It all depends on how you use it."

Raph grunted again, avoiding her gaze for now. Tang Shen focused on picking off food from her son's shell, eggs, pancake, hash browns and a rare waffle being chucked into a bucket. "Yeah… I'll try."

"Count to ten, I know your father does that often." She pressed a gentle peck against his brow, making the teenager sigh a little. His lips were vaguely starting to quirk upwards. Whilst his father had a very 'I'm disappointed in you' approach for these speeches, his mother tended to try and offer something else. "A slow breath and a slow count can channel that anger into more useful ways."

"Thanks, mom." He did smile a little more now. The reminder his parents had equally terrible temper did help him feel less like a force of nature packed in one shell.

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